The controversial and difficult question arising from the recognition of Friederich Nietzsche's influence on Leo Strauss is the precise quality and direction of that influence. Strauss's published assessments of Nietzsche are characterized by both respect and reservation. He clearly values the high rank that Nietzsche bestows on the philosopher. In addition, Strauss learns from Nietzsche's criticisms of modern liberalism and his questioning of the whole tradition of Western political philosophy, as well as his concomitant return to the ancients in the search for those forms of human existence that are higher than others. Despite this impressive and forthrightly acknowledged indebtedness, Strauss also sees a current in Nietzsche's thinking that reflects modern philosophy's lowering of the aims of reason in favor of a search for knowledge that would allow humanity to master its own environment.

Strauss's ambiguous and at times apparently contradictory views of Nietzsche provide a challenge to analysts of both Strauss and Nietzsche. In *Nietzsche and Leo Strauss*, Laurence Lampert joins Shadia Drury and Stephen Holmes in exploring the Nietzschean features of Leo Strauss's thought. Yet, rather than tackling the difficult question of what Strauss embraced and rejected from Nietzsche, Lampert joins Drury and Holmes in taking a misplaced delight in revealing what no serious reader of Strauss can question—Nietzsche's influence on Strauss. Holmes, Drury, and Lampert
agree that Strauss blends his Nietzschean outlook with an interpretation of Plato to formulate a new type of aristocratic politics. They differ on their assessment of Strauss's "Nietzschean" endeavor. Holmes and Drury proclaim themselves the friends of the people while accusing Strauss of betraying the cause of freedom. But Lampert warmly embraces the radically aristocratic view of Strauss while cursing the cultural and political dominance of the ignorant crowd and mourning the lack of hierarchy in contemporary political and social life. Lampert's primary criticism of Strauss is his failure to propose a politics sufficiently hierarchical for the postmodern age (23-24, 184-87).

An evaluation of the significance of the Nietzsche-Strauss connection also confronts another challenge: the politics of Nietzsche's thought. At a time when Nietzsche has gained an enthusiastic following among postmodern thinkers on the Left, the attempt to link the views of Strauss and Nietzsche is seen as an appropriation of Nietzsche from the Right. The divergent views about the political role of Nietzsche's thought reflect conflicting currents within Nietzsche's writings. In general, the analysts who focus on Nietzsche's perspectivism identify him with the Left, while those that focus on Nietzsche's advocacy for a revaluation identify Nietzsche with the Right. Since Walter Kaufmann refuted the belief that Nietzsche was a proto-Nazi and proposed that he actually was a Socratic dialectician without any system of thought, the center of gravity of Nietzsche scholarship in America has shifted to the Left. Most postmodern thinkers focus almost exclusively on the perspectivism, making Nietzsche over into a thinker without positive teachings. To these writers, Nietzsche is a thinker primarily concerned with questions of how we know rather than how we should live, a seminal figure in the elaboration of the politics of difference and self-making. Lampert, Drury and Holmes place revaluation at the center of Nietzsche's thinking, with its political focus on reestablishing the distinction between what is noble and what is base. While all of these writers' exclusive attention on one aspect of Nietzsche's thinking makes Nietzsche more coherent, such a focus does not necessarily make him more profound. Moreover, our authors are so caught up in
linking Strauss to their partisan interpretations of Nietzsche that they fail to notice Strauss's own views on Nietzsche. As we will see, Strauss placed neither revaluation nor perspectivism at the heart of Nietzsche's thinking.

Lampert argues that Strauss has a rare understanding of Nietzsche. So deep is Strauss's appreciation of Nietzsche that Strauss places Nietzsche alongside Plato as the greatest of all philosophers, founders of the outlooks that create an order of rank among human beings, according to Lampert. Strauss, Lampert continues, agrees with Nietzsche's understanding that previous philosophers, as led and taught by Plato, practiced an esoteric politics to manipulate the moralities that foster such orders of rank (20-24, 159-65). Strauss also shares Nietzsche's belief that Platonism is dead and that, as the dream of a better other-worldly existence has faded, Nietzsche's views on the will to power, eternal return, and value-creating philosophers are more appropriate for establishing a hierarchical order than Plato's doctrines of the pure spirit, ideas, and all-knowing gods (97-110, 180).

Unfortunately, Lampert confesses, Strauss does not easily fit into this allegedly Nietzschean mold. For while Lampert can discover no substantive difference in the philosophy of Strauss and Nietzsche, he is forced to acknowledge that Strauss's scattered discussions of Nietzsche are characterized by ambivalence. Perhaps, Lampert speculates, Strauss exaggerates marginal disagreements with Nietzsche to veil his general support and to avoid the wrath of those with deeply held prejudices concerning him (5-15). In any event, Lampert insists that Strauss did not find a substantive philosophical difference between Plato and Nietzsche. Their difference was merely tactical, having to do with the proper strategy for legislating the underlying assumptions and values for their eras. In Lampert's view, Strauss understood the Platonic Socrates as a "revolutionary theologian," a creator of myths that allowed the philosopher to rule a political regime indirectly through the political manipulation of others. In contrast, Nietzsche's philosophers of the future explicitly will a hierarchical order of rank that allows philosophers complete autonomy and places them at the top of the social
pyramid (15-24, 117-28). On the most important issues, Lampert concludes, Strauss believed "Nietzsche and Plato shared the same view of what a philosopher is, a most exalted view that Nietzsche paraded and Plato sheltered.... Plato and Nietzsche are kin in aspiring to spiritual rule: they are rivals in their manner of exercising that rule or in their response to their times" (20).

What in philosophical terms was only a tactical difference concerning the path to power, however, has become an opening that enemies of philosophy have used to their advantage. Lampert feels Plato's willingness to allow others to rule has led to both the reign of Christianity and a contemporary abdication in the face of modern democratic assaults. Matters have reached a point where all hierarchy is threatened. Nietzsche's rejection of the Platonic strategy and his articulation of the "youngest virtue"-probity or the intellectual conscience-is needed to wage a public defense on behalf of philosophy and its unique, capacity to legislate a new order of rank (177-84).

Strauss's mistake, according to Lampert, is that he opts for the Platonic political strategy that takes a less outspoken route for legislating values. Invoking Nietzsche's distinction in *Beyond Good and Evil* between philosophical laborers who report on the ideas that other philosophers create and new philosophers who originate new values, Lampert identifies Strauss as belonging in the "laborer" category. Strauss understands Nietzsche, Lampert continues, as is seen by his "Note on Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil.*" In that essay, Strauss explains why Nietzsche is more relevant than Plato in an age when God is dead and science is understood as an interpretation. What Strauss lacks, however, is the courage of the new philosophers to legislate values directly. Perhaps, Lampert wonders, it is precisely this shortage of political courage in Strauss that causes so much confusion when he comments on the decidedly more courageous Nietzsche. "From a Straussian perspective," Lampert charges, "the essay is a scandal" (11). Lampert's self-appointed task in *Leo Strauss and Nietzsche* is to show that Strauss felt deep down that Nietzsche is superior to Plato (24,166-67,185).

Lampert is not boring. His sweeping analysis and sensational
accusations make for a good story and fun reading, but they are not supported by what Strauss actually says in his writings. Strauss found more than mere tactical differences between Plato and Nietzsche. Strauss disagreed with Nietzsche's interpretation of a metaphysical Plato, a position most fully articulated by Neoplatonist and Christian thinkers, which placed spiritual rule or specific beliefs such as the pure spirit and doctrine of ideas at the center of Plato's thinking. Getting to the heart of Lampert's error in regard to Plato and Strauss requires a careful walk down a long and difficult road. In brief, what Lampert does is misinterpret Strauss's reading of Farabi and then use that mistake to associate both Plato and Strauss wrongly with the legislation of values. Lampert also erroneously believes that Strauss placed revaluation at the center of Nietzsche's thought and ignores what Strauss understood to be the central features and tensions in Nietzsche's thinking. To remedy this mistake by Lampert, we need to take stock of Strauss's views on Nietzsche's doctrines of eternal recurrence and will to power, the differing approaches to metaphysics taken by Plato and Nietzsche, and the subtle but important distinction Strauss draws between probity and the love of truth. In the process, we will see that Lampert repeatedly misstates Strauss's views and constantly fails to identify what Strauss most appreciated in Nietzsche's thinking.

Throughout *Leo Strauss and Nietzsche* Lampert ignores the question which is at the center of much of Strauss's thinking, namely, what is the right way to live? Despite Lampert's insistence that the creation of values capable of sustaining orders is the centerpiece of Strauss's thinking, for Strauss, as I will argue, yearning or striving for wholeness and perfection culminated, not in the creation of values, but in contemplation of the cosmos. The mark of the noble soul, as most fully expressed in the Platonic dialogues, is not the possession of, but rather the longing for, and preoccupation with, excellence, beauty, and wholeness. The philosopher understands that human beings both require and lack knowledge of what is most important, a truth that is revealed through the contradictions in the beliefs of those who are sure they have knowledge of the most important things.'
To Strauss, the philosopher does not necessarily renounce politics. But when times are ripe for philosophers to participate in politics—and they rarely are—the task of contributing to the laws and moralities of a political regime does not center on shaping public opinion into a reflection of the philosophers' understanding of the truth. Nor does this legislative aspect of the philosophers' thinking revolve around specific laws or ideas; it is the articulation of the "art of arts" or the "philosophy of legislation," contributing to the general understandings from which the statesman and other political participants operate. This legislation aims to address the separate goals of the philosophers' quest for self-definition and autonomy and, the city's need for standards of excellence and justice. "The solution to the problems of justice obviously transcends the limits of political life," Strauss noted. "It implies that the justice which is possible within the city, can be only imperfect or cannot be unquestionably good."

Lampert's obsessive concern is the philosophers' ability to legislate values that will establish themselves as spiritual rulers. Lampert recognizes Strauss's reading of the poetic side of Plato's political philosophy, but he confuses a means that Strauss finds Plato using to protect philosophy with the end of establishing the spiritual rule of the philosophers. "Classical philosophy's vaunted moderation hid philosophy's actual immoderation, its mania or madness in pursuit of truth," notes Lampert while summarizing ancient philosophy. "With respect to Plato, Strauss allows it to be seen that the endorsement of moderation and the elaboration of a world-view on moderation's behalf masked in fact another aspect of classical philosophy's immoderation: its desire to rule" (120-21). When Lampert discusses what Strauss learned from Plato there is little discussion of philosophy as the quest to understand the truth. Rather, the core of Platonism for Lampert's Strauss is "the order of rank in the human and natural things...and its successful practice of the kingly art, its conscription of high autonomous human achievements into its ministerial services. This marriage of philosophy and politics, insight and action, is Platonic political philosophy (159-60). As we can see, Lampert's "Revaluation" of Strauss has him..."
pursuing goals that are—when compared to the pursuit of philosophic truth—rather low and common.

Strauss's Farabi and Plato

Lampert's failure to assess properly Strauss's reading of Plato is tied to a surprisingly common methodological error among Strauss commentators: the failure to focus on Strauss's expositions and commentaries on the Platonic dialogues. Shadia Drury, who presents her work as a product of meticulous research on Strauss's writings, does not contain a single citation to either Plato or Aristotle in her chapters devoted to Strauss's understanding of Socrates and classic natural right. Lampert establishes his view of Strauss's understanding of Plato and political philosophy in general through Strauss's reading of Farabi's interpretation of Plato, most notably Strauss's essay, "Farabi's Plato." The Plato with whom Strauss constantly contrasts Nietzsche, summarizes Lampert, "the Plato who measures Nietzsche and is measured by Nietzsche, is Alfarabi's Plato, successful founder of Platonic political philosophy" (19, 14-20, 136-45):

More curious still; though Lampert identifies Strauss's reading of Farabi's Plato as central, he neglects almost all of Strauss's analysis. Lampert's central concern with respect to Strauss's reading of Farabi's' Plato is the account of Plato's corrective to the raw dialectics of Socrates. On this account, Plato responds to the political isolation and persecution faced by his mentor by combining the Socratic method of rational' interrogation of moral and political virtues 'with Plato's own more artful presentations of divine and natural things. What this reading amounts to, then, is the claim that Plato's writings proceed on two tracks by combining the philosophic way of Socrates among the intelligent with the persuasive way of Thrasyvachus among the public. As Strauss explains Farabi's position, "While the intransigent way of Socrates is appropriate in the philosopher's dealings with the political elite only, the less exacting way of Thrasyvachus is appropriate in his dealings with the vulgar and young. By combining the two ways, Plato avoided the conflict with the vulgar and thus the fate of Socrates."
Through this dual approach, Lampert argues, Strauss finds the philosopher is able to survive and recruit new philosophers, while also deftly forging a new public opinion that corresponds to the philosophers' understanding of the truth (16-20). "Particularly important in [Strauss's] characterization of the way of Plato," Lampert emphasizes, "is the fact that the way of Plato aims at a replacement of the accepted opinions: it does not simply oppose them or accommodate itself to them; it accommodates itself to them because it opposes them, and it accommodates itself to them in order to replace them.... It feigns conformity to mask its revolutionary intentions. The way of Plato is secretly revolutionary; it revolutionizes by seeming to support the conventional." Lampert concludes that Strauss learns from Farabi's Plato that through the transformation of opinion, "the philosopher comes to exercise a secret kinship; the philosopher rules in the only way that it is possible for him to rule" (17-18),

All of Lampert's statements on Strauss's understanding of Plato present the view that Platonic political philosophy subtly transforms society and establishes the spiritual rule of the philosophers. Lampert asserts that Strauss views the Laws, the dialogue in which Plato is not held back by the participation of Socrates, as the standard for the successful synthesis of philosophy and public opinion in which a philosopher prudently founds a public with a "civic-minded philosophy" that no longer questions or threatens philosophy (160-61). Lampert argues that Strauss finds Plato's quest to win over the multitude to the efficacy of philosophy has been "too successful," jeopardizing philosophy itself and contributing to Christianity (140, 155, n. 20). Lampert's one-sided position of the tasks unique to Plato's political philosophy culminates in his review of Strauss's reading of the Republic in The City and the Man. There Lampert focuses solely on the taming of Thrasymachus, asserting rather arbitrarily that "this is the core of Platonic political philosophy.... The rule of the wise will be a secret spiritual kingship mediated by the art of persuasion and its famous practitioner [Thrasymachus]" (154, 147-59).

By focusing solely on Farabi's reading of Plato, and excluding an
analysis of Strauss's more substantive expositions and commentaries on the Platonic dialogues—particularly the *Republic*, *Laws*, and *Statesman*—Lampert misses his target and misleads his readers. In fact, Strauss never endorsed the view that Plato and Socrates represented a distinct vision of political philosophy. Nor did he read Plato as advocating the rule of philosophy over public opinion, with or without intermediaries.

If Lampert had read more carefully the one work he asserts is key, "Farabi's Plato," he could have avoided the serious mistakes he commits. For all its visions and arguments on behalf of criteria for the virtues in political life, Strauss found that Platonic philosophy is critical of the ethically corrosive habits of mind typical of the Sophists. Had Lampert paid attention to this side of Strauss's interpretation of Farabi's Plato, he may have become aware of the difficulties involved in legislating values according to the philosophers' understanding of truth. After all, how does one legislate values in accordance with a philosophy that is suspicious of all received opinion and beliefs, no matter how important to the established order? To Strauss, Farabi's Plato has much "more in common with a philosophic materialist than with any non-philosophic believer however well-intentioned," as philosophy is "essentially and purely theoretical,...the way leading to the science of the beings as distinguished from the science of the ways of life."

Not surprisingly, Lampert barely mentions Strauss's observation that Farabi's Plato places contemplation and the quest for truth as the highest form of human activity—a way of life that is far different from, and much superior to, the practical activities and beliefs characteristic of life in the city. Philosophy is the "quest for the truth which is animated by the conviction that [this] quest alone makes life worth living, and which is fortified by the distrust of man's natural propensity to rest satisfied with satisfying, if unevident or unproven, convictions."

Finally, Lampert overlooks Strauss's point that the politics of Farabi's Plato does not center on fashioning a public opinion that somehow mirrors the truth. Rather, the philosophers are deeply aware of the difference between their understanding of the truth and the beliefs necessary for a viable city.
philosophers are primarily concerned with politics and public opinion in relation to their influence on the pursuit of philosophy. Philosophers do not require a perfect city nor as philosophers do they think it very attainable. As long as philosophers can strive for human perfection through contemplation, they are willing to live "in the imperfect cities, i.e. the world as it actually is and always will be, happiness is within the reach of the philosophers alone." Indeed, Strauss emphasizes that one should not identify the politics of Farabi's Plato as a strategy to bring the public closer to philosophy. The philosopher must always be aware that he lives "in grave danger" and that there is no bridge between philosophic and vulgar virtue. Yet all of this is lost on Lampert and nowhere to be found in his account of Farabi's Plato.

Herein lies a key tension in Strauss's reading of Farabi's Plato. On the one hand, Strauss finds Farabi's Plato portraying political philosophy as a way to foster a protective atmosphere for philosophy itself and the separation of philosophic and vulgar virtue. On the other hand, Strauss also finds Farabi's Plato suggesting that the Platonic corrective leads to the remolding of public opinion in the image of the philosophers' understanding of the truth." This tension, which goes right to the heart of the question as to what is political about philosophy, is an important feature of all of Strauss's exposition and commentaries on the Platonic dialogues. Lampert misses an important clue in "Farabi's Plato" as to how Strauss approaches this question. Strauss frequently comments on his own deep intellectual debt to Farabi; and yet, when it comes to his assessment of the Platonic corrective to Socrates, Strauss is quite reserved. The first time Strauss mentions it in "Farabi's Plato" he points out that the Platonic corrective allows philosophers both to slowly teach potential philosophers the truth and to transform public beliefs to conform with philosophy. The second time the corrective comes up, however, Strauss does not mention the goal of remolding public opinion.

Why does the second leg of the Platonic corrective-remolding public opinion to conform with philosophy-drop out of Strauss's argument? The answer may be found in the very same paragraph.
"Repetition," Strauss informs us, "is a normal pedagogic device which is destined to reveal the truth to those who are able to understand by themselves while hiding it from the vulgar: whereas the vulgar are blinded by the features common to the first statement and the 'repetition,' those who are able to understand will pay the utmost attention to the differences." If we follow Strauss's own suggestion for careful reading—especially the injunction to "pay the utmost attention to...differences" between original and subsequent restatements—we will see the distance Strauss sought to place between his own position and that of Farabi. But because he is preoccupied with the theme of legislating values, Lampert is unable to acknowledge, much less explore, the ambiguity in Strauss's reading of the political philosophy of Farabi's Plato.

Strauss's own expositions and commentaries on the Platonic dialogues simply do not reveal philosophers subtly revolutionizing public opinion and legislating values to attain some type of spiritual kingship. Strauss does maintain in *City and Man* that Socrates's taming of Thrasymachus in *the Republic* is necessary for philosophy. Lampert distorts Strauss's argument, however, when "taming" Thrasymachus is expanded to include an alliance that centers on legislating a new public opinion that enables the philosophers to rule indirectly: Rather, the disciplining of Thasymachus prepares the education of Glaucon and Adiemantus. "What Socrates does in the Thrasymachus section would be inexcusable," states Strauss, "if he had not done it in order to provoke the passionate reaction of Glaucon." The teaching of Glaucon and Adiemantus, which Lampert ignores, is private education at a private party after the public man, Cephalus, has left. Strauss does not conclude from *the Republic* that philosophic efforts to guide public opinion and pursue advantageous political alliances will produce a public opinion that ends the tension between philosophy and society. Strauss finds Socrates only showing that a political idea of justice is salutary.

Strauss recognized that the *Laws* provided an excellent case for determining whether Plato understood the relation between the philosopher and the city differently from Socrates and whether Plato believed that the philosopher can overcome this tension through the
discreet legislation of values. Indeed, Strauss noted that Farabi's situating of the *Laws* in Plato's philosophy should "be understood as part of such a presentation of Plato's philosophy as is guided by a peculiar distinction between the way of Socrates and the way of Plato." In the *Laws*, the Athenian Stranger contributes to the founding constitution of the city, and it is proposed that those who are the best educated will work alongside more traditional authorities in the Nocturnal Council to review the laws and the society as a whole. Socrates and his confrontational approach to debating issues concerning political and moral virtue does not participate in the *Laws*. The question therefore becomes: Does Strauss find Plato substituting for Socrates a more conservative, but nonetheless, legislative way of action for the philosopher; in other words, the gradual replacement of the accepted opinions by the truth or an approximation to the truth?

In Strauss's analysis of the *Laws* he rejects the idea that the philosopher is able to legislate a public opinion that does not conflict with a philosophic understanding of the truth. He notes that the deeper the Athenian Stranger becomes engaged in the conversation about the practical foundations of the regime, the less opportunity he has to engage in philosophical discussions. Strauss comments that Socrates is able to engage in more edifying discussions among the youth in the *Republic* than the Athenian Stranger is in the more practically oriented *Laws*. "At the end of his discussion of education the Athenian turns abruptly to hunting," Strauss comments. "Hunting occupies in the *Laws* the place which dialectics occupies in the *Republic*; there is no place in the *Laws* for the noblest branch of learning, for a branch of learning nobler than astronomy." It is even difficult for the Athenian Stranger to introduce the word "philosophy" in the *Laws*. Strauss also warns against assuming that the restrictions imposed on atheism in the *Laws* are more amenable to the philosopher than those of Athens which contributed to the death of Socrates. He cautions against conflating the political proposals introduced by the Athenian Stranger with philosophical wisdom; they are expressions of practical wisdom-adaptations by the wise to the citizen body or consent. The Athenian Stranger, Strauss con-
Plato, Nietzsche, & Strauss

eludes, recognizes all of these problems and is unwilling to commit himself to staying and seeing his proposals implemented."

In short, Strauss does not find Plato teaching in *the Laws* that the principal concern of the philosopher is the remolding of public opinion into a bridge between philosophic and vulgar virtue. And while Strauss leaves his difference with Farabi on the Platonic corrective unstated, he counsels against "drawing a clear line between Socrates and Plato... The decisive fact for us is that Plato as it were points away from himself to Socrates. If we wish to understand Plato, we must take him seriously; we must take seriously in particular his deference to Socrates. Plato points not only to Socrates speeches but to his whole life, to his fate as well."

Strauss seems to suggest that we must study the *Statesman* to discern what Plato understood as most politically advisable and feasible. Here, the Eleatic Stranger initially discusses the limitations of the rule of law: Rules suffer from a generality that limits their applicability in diverse and new circumstances; laws also place fetters on those who are wisest, the individuals with the best understanding of how to govern. But eventually the Eleatic Stranger enlarges his perspective and presents the rule of law as the least bad of the realistic political alternatives: the rule of law based on consent is the best that we can expect in practice. Such a moderate polity does not end the tension between the philosopher and the city. Rather, the freezing of practices into rules that are "sacred, inviolable, unchangeable, prescriptions...is the proximate cause of the ineradicable difference between the political and the suprapolitical spheres." More important, the wise must follow the rules that are inferior to them in wisdom and justice, "not only in deed but in speech as well."

Can the philosopher accept such restrictions? Strauss finds that Plato offers the following ambiguous answer: "Socrates obeyed without flinching the law which commanded him to die because of the alleged corruption of the young; yet he would not have obeyed a law formally forbidding him the pursuit of philosophy."

In sum, Strauss analyzed three Platonic dialogues in which the best political order is discussed—the *Republic, Laws,* and *Statesman.* In his analysis of the *Republic* Strauss concludes that the
proposals offered by Socrates for a just political order ruled by philosopher-kings exists only in speech. While the political arrangement proposed by the Athenian Stranger in the *Laws* initially appears to offer a practical reconciliation of philosophy and politics, Strauss points out that as the dialogue progresses it becomes apparent that the tensions between the philosopher and the city are too, sharp and that it is an impractical political regime. The political orientation that Strauss finds Plato comes closest to embracing is that of the Eleatic Stranger in the *Statesman*: the rule of law based on consent is the least bad political choice. Nonetheless, the philosopher stands in a problematic relation to this regime as well. Indeed, the fate of Socrates remains a distinct possibility! Lampert's claim that Strauss understood Plato's political philosophy as the prudent legislation of values that would establish the spiritual rule of the philosophers is, not so much a willful misreading of Strauss's writings, as a stubborn refusal to read them at all.

**Nietzsche and the Problem of Socrates**

The assessment of the proper relation between Socrates and Plato has been a portal to the pivotal questions of the relations between philosophy and art and the philosopher and the city. Farabi, as discussed, distinguishes Socrates and Plato and argues that Plato's corrective to the ways of Socrates points to the necessity for the philosopher to revolutionize public opinion artfully. Strauss did not distinguish Plato and Socrates and argues that the philosophers' art primarily centered on the protection of philosophy, a task which did not envision public opinion as a reflection of philosophy, but which was not necessarily incompatible with contributing to the public good. Nietzsche often presented Socrates as the corrupter of Plato, the man who destroyed art through theoretical criticisms, inducing a change from an instinctual morality to a morality based on reason. How does Lampert approach this central question of political philosophy? He tells *us* that all three—Farabi, Strauss and Nietzsche—have the same position on Socrates's and Plato's views on the proper relation between philosophy and art and the philosopher and the city (2-3, 16-24, 140, 155 n. 20).
Since Lampert asserts that Nietzsche and Strauss have the same view of Plato, readers will be interested to know how Lampert approaches Strauss's published differences with Nietzsche on Plato and Socrates. But first it is necessary to give a brief account of Strauss's views on Nietzsche's reading of Socrates and Plato.

The difficulty with Nietzsche's treatment of Plato, according to Strauss, is that Nietzsche assumed Plato's doctrine of ideas and pure spirit were part of a legislative project or dogmatic pronouncements, rather than masks to hide the core of his teachings or hypothesis. More important, in *Socrates and Aristophanes*, Strauss presents "the problem of Socrates" in a way fundamentally different from, and expressly critical of, Nietzsche. For Nietzsche, the problem of Socrates did not revolve around the way of life that he stood for, but rather the false beliefs that he represented concerning the validity and truth-bearing properties of rational thought. Nietzsche saw Socrates as the theoretical man par excellence. Unable to bear tragic wisdom, Socrates introduced the idea that life could be guided by theoretical reason alone. Nietzsche maintains that the Enlightenment dream of universal happiness, perfect equality, and the abolition of suffering reflects the Socratic outlook in its extreme form. In *Socrates and Aristophanes* Strauss does not comment on Nietzsche's diagnosis of the source of the levelling tendencies in modernity. Instead, Strauss suggests that it was wrong for Nietzsche not to notice that the Socrates whom he attacked more closely resembled the young Socrates whom Aristophanes ridiculed in the *Clouds, a Socrates whom Nietzsche charges with the corruption of Plato."

But this Socrates, Strauss maintains, differed markedly from the Platonic Socrates. Indeed, Strauss suggests that it is helpful to understand the Platonic Socrates as a response to all of Aristophanes plays. Aristophanes *Clouds*, according to Strauss, provides a critique of Socrates-namely that his one dimensional scientific outlook leads to his own demise as well as that of the city. *The Thesmophoriazusai* teaches that one must learn the art of avoiding conflict with the truths that one does not embrace-local laws, norms, and gods. *The Frogs* teaches that those responsible for the public good appreciate and protect the individuals who are oriented
to contributing to a regime's political prosperity. *The Ecclesiazusae* points out the constraints a community faces in attempting to overcome nature and establish complete justice, the quest to sever the individual from concern for his body and himself more generally. Strauss finds that responses to those key lessons from a variety of Aristophanes plays can be found in Plato's presentation of Socrates in the *Republic.*

Strauss's criticism of Nietzsche's Socrates is not insignificant. He is suggesting that the theoretical life may not be as exhausted as Nietzsche assumes, that Plato and Socrates are as aware of the limitations of the *logos* at the beginning of Western political philosophy as Nietzsche is during what he believes is the end of Western political philosophy. Indeed, it is precisely to overcome this limitation that the art of Plato displays the attitude of Aeschylus, not Euripides.

Lampert, who professes to respect Strauss's writings, rudely ignores Strauss's criticism of Nietzsche's understanding of the problem of Socrates. When Strauss notes that Plato points away from himself to Socrates, he stresses that we are examining the life of the philosopher and his problematic relation to society. "Plato points...to Socrates's speeches...to his whole life, to his fate as well." But Lampert ascribes to Strauss the Neoplatonist, Christian interpretation of Plato that was held by Nietzsche. So when Lampert discusses Strauss's assessment that Plato points to Socrates, he claims Strauss's Plato is informing us of divinity and religious virtue (26). While Strauss, *contra* Nietzsche, understands Plato's art as a means to protect philosophy, Lampert asserts both Nietzsche and Strauss understood Plato's art as the legislation of values that would become Christianity. "If Plato taught us to fear Homeric monsters, perhaps we'll have to follow Nietzsche's lead and take another hard look at Plato's Socrates," Lampert notes. "Does that composite beast also shelter a Homeric monster? Nietzsche thought so; and so, it seems, did Strauss" (2-3, 155, n. 20). According to Lampert, the main difference between Nietzsche and Strauss in regard to Plato is Strauss's unwillingness to explicitly state that Christianity is "Platonism for the people" (140).
The Political Legacies of Plato and Nietzsche

While Lampert ignores the manner in which Strauss treats the question of metaphysics, it will help clarify Strauss's view of Plato and Nietzsche if we briefly review how Strauss understood Plato's and Nietzsche's respective accounts of nature's first and highest principles. Strauss's views here are controversial and unconventional. As noted earlier, he breaks from the traditional Western view, most fully articulated by Neoplatonist and Christian thinkers, that places spiritual rule and specific beliefs such as the pure spirit or doctrine of ideas at the center of his thought. \(^{35}\) Strauss held that Plato cannot be associated with a specific idea of the good or cosmology. First, Plato never wrote specifically on the subject of nature. More important, the Platonic dialogues examine the assumptions underlying different opinions and reveal how all beliefs presuppose an understanding of the whole and metaphysics. Following Socrates' dialectic, one finds different opinions contradict one another on the nature of the most important things. "Recognizing the contradiction, one is forced to go beyond opinions toward the consistent view of the nature of the thing concerned. That consistent view makes visible the relative truth of the contradictory opinions: the consistent view proves to be the comprehensive or total view," yet the comprehensive or total view is never found to be available. The dialogues do not establish a specific idea of the good. Everyone who presents such an exposition of the comprehensive or total Platonic world view "becomes, to use a favorite Platonic expression, `ridiculous,' inasmuch as he can be easily refuted and confounded by passages in the dialogues which contradict his exposition." In short, Plato loves and pursues, but does not claim to possess, knowledge of nature's first and highest principles. What distinguishes the understanding of the Platonic philosopher from the views of all others is nothing but knowledge of one's ignorance. "No more is needed to legitimize philosophy in its original Socratic sense: philosophy is knowledge that one does not know; that is to say, it is knowledge of the fundamental problems and therewith, of the fundamental alternatives regarding their solution that are coeval with human thought."
Consequently, all attempts to articulate political outlooks from Plato's writings contradict Plato. "His dialogues supply us not as much with an answer to the riddle of being as with a most articulate imitation of the riddle," states Strauss. "In the last analysis his writings cannot be used for any purpose other than for philosophizing. In particular, no social order and no party which ever existed or which ever will exist can rightfully claim Plato as its patron." The reader will not be surprised to learn that Lampert does not so much as notice these passages, which appear so pertinent to his interpretation.

Strauss recognizes that many of Nietzsche's philosophical explorations, like those of Plato, seek to discover the human drives underlying different forms of art, morality, religion, history, and other valuations. In these writings, Nietzsche indicates that the cosmos has an intelligible character, that there is a suprahistorical ethical order, and that the understanding of these questions is a noble calling. But Strauss concludes that while Nietzsche's thinking moves in the direction of a Platonic quest to discover the foundations of morality, Nietzsche also turns to creating. Ironically, Nietzsche's turn to creation is inspired by his claim that he has discovered the true character of the world. Unlike Plato, Nietzsche feels trapped by the modern quest to use political and technological power to overcome natural differences and hierarchy. Nietzsche knows about the true character of the world, but he feels he can no longer assume the existence of a high and low, so, Nietzsche "must will it, or postulate it." On the one hand, Nietzsche marks a return to the ancient quest to understand the fundamental problems of the meaning and best forms of human existence. On the other hand, Nietzsche does not completely avoid the modern aim of mastering nature. Still, Nietzsche, according to Strauss, is like Plato in not bequeathing a specific blueprint for politics. "In a sense, all political use of Nietzsche is a perversion of his teaching." One must conclude from Strauss's perspective that Lampert, who proposes a universal blueprint for politics, wrongly claims Plato as his patron and perverts Nietzsche's teachings.
Lampert's Heideggerian Reading of Nietzsche

Contrasting how Heidegger and Strauss situate Nietzsche in the history of Western political philosophy also helps clarify Strauss's view of Nietzsche. Additionally, it turns out that the sharp divergence of views separating Strauss and Lampert regarding Nietzsche's teachings can be traced impart to Lampert's more Heideggerian reading of Nietzsche. Like Strauss, Heidegger believed Nietzsche's thinking was caught in contradictions that grew out of his attempt to overcome the thinking of the past. According to Heidegger, the essence of Western philosophy from Plato to Nietzsche was the history of metaphysics or the attempt to point to the reasons lying behind being. Indeed, Plato and Nietzsche were the thinkers who best presented the truth of Being as it appeared at their respective times. Nietzsche's pronouncement that "God is dead," he noted, brought Western metaphysics to the crisis point with the recognition that the suprasensory world no longer existed. "Nevertheless, as a mere countermovement [Nietzsche's thought] necessarily remains, as does everything 'anti,' held fast in the essence of that over which it moves."

Of course, Heidegger and Strauss have very different views of Plato. Unlike Strauss's distinction between Plato's quest to discover knowledge and knowledge itself, Heidegger emphasizes Plato's metaphysics as "meaning nothing other than the knowledge of the Being of beings, which is distinguished by apriority and which is conceived by Plato as idea." Heidegger describes how Plato's initial articulation of being as "idea" unintentionally gave rise to an historical development or disclosure of "the truth of Being." Strauss finds a less univocal Plato, one who does not place the doctrine of ideas at the center of his thought; but rather focuses on articulating a way of life that pursues the discovery of the metaphysical basis to our opinions and existence.

Strauss and Heidegger mean very different things when they identify Nietzsche as the key figure of a new direction for Western philosophy. Heidegger understands Nietzsche as the philosopher who points to the need to restructure and overcome all of Western
philosophy. As Heidegger concludes when discussing the implications of Nietzsche's conflict with Plato, "A new hierarchy and new valuation mean that the ordering structure must be changed.... To that extent, overturning Platonism must become a twisting free of it." Strauss reads a very different Nietzsche. Nietzsche's significance for our age should not be found in the arena where values and truths are created. Instead, Strauss argues, the difficulties and perplexities raised by Nietzsche's studies and celebration of creativity raises the possibility of returning to the study of morality and nature's first principles. Clearly, then, Lampert's understanding of Plato is closer to that of Heidegger than Strauss. Lampert also follows Heidegger concerning what lessons can be learned from Nietzsche's conflict with Plato. "Strauss teaches skepticism about Platonic dogmatism," Lampert asserts, "while Nietzsche teaches convalescence and surmounting".

Nietzsche and Nature
The same misreading of Strauss which allows Lampert to claim that Strauss's only difference with Nietzsche centers on the proper strategy for legislating values, leads Lampert to conclude mistakenly that Strauss's difficulty with Nietzsche's doctrine of the eternal return stems from Nietzsche's tactical approach to presenting the doctrine. While discussing Strauss's exposition of the eternal return in "Note on Nietzsche's Beyond Good and Evil," Lampert points to Strauss's letters to Karl Lowith, written in 1935, as providing insight into the former's thinking on Nietzsche, but Lampert draws the wrong conclusions from Strauss's assessment. Lampert reports that Strauss disagrees with Lowith for being too critical of a doctrine that manages to establish a morality with an order of rank rooted in nature. Strauss does not deny that the doctrine is inflammatory, Lampert continues, but Strauss emphasizes that this is a rhetorical problem based on his "modern audience" having been weakened by Christianity. In short, Nietzsche had strategic considerations—the wrath of believers in creation and providence—that necessitated presenting the eternal return in rhetoric laced with conflict. Speaking for Strauss, Lampert states that under different conditions
probity or intellectual honesty would require that the eternal return be taught in a temperate fashion. Lampert claims Strauss's letters to Lowith confirm that Strauss believes the eternal return provides the basis for a new religion that rejects the God of revelation and reevaluates what is high and low (109-110).

But Strauss's letters to Lowith on Nietzsche are not about the strategy and tactics required to reevaluate religion. The letters are consistent with Strauss's general position that there are competing currents in Nietzsche's thinking. On the one hand, Strauss believes that Nietzsche makes important steps toward a classical understanding of philosophy through his quest to understand nature's highest and first principles. At the same time, Strauss argues that Nietzsche approaches ancient philosophy with a modern bias—either seeking to gain, or break away from, the control and mastery of values—leading to either weakened or contradictory beliefs and positions. As the rest of this essay will show, Strauss maintains this view in all of his major statements about Nietzsche.47

While discussing differences with Lowith's treatment of eternal return, Strauss states that there are two fundamental tensions in the doctrine itself. One contradiction is the oscillation between "a.) a modern approach to antiquity chiefly based on an immanent critique of modernity, b.) the ancient teaching itself." Nietzsche is attempting, like the ancients, to situate man in the cosmos through articulating an understanding of nature. But, Strauss emphasizes, Nietzsche's cosmology is compromised by its focus on the world we live in as the exclusive site of value, a focus that was part of Nietzsche's attempt to establish an alternative cosmology that could compete with Christianity. Nietzsche's eternal return also insisted on the innocence and desirability of all previous worldly kinds of "becoming." This valuation of becoming is part of an effort to discredit and replace a long tradition in Western philosophy which exclusively valorizes the other-worldly, the not-this-worldly. Nietzsche diagnosed this will-to-escape the world as the frustrated response of a memory-laden and reflective animal that cannot successfully oppose its will to the accretions of time. The will wants to be free and self-determining, but the oppressive determinants of
a time-bound culture qualify and injure this will. Nietzsche understood this frustration and wanted to overcome it. "In other words," Strauss summarizes, "the eternal return is discovered in the search for a strong and courage-producing myth." The doctrine of the eternal return is not unclear due to Nietzsche's rhetoric. Instead, Strauss argues, the ambiguity surrounding the idea of eternal return should be traced to its emergence as a polemical doctrine engaged in a conflict over the legislation of values. The eternal return is "asserted convulsively by Nietzsche only because he had to wean us and himself from millennia-old pampering (softening) due to belief in creation and providence."

The second fundamental tension that Strauss finds in the eternal return is between "a.) morality and b.) metaphysics. Once again, Strauss points out that one can learn from Nietzsche if his quest for revaluation is put to the side. Strauss states that he does not feel that the identification of the will to power and eternal return offer a solution to the moral problems of modernity. "Yet to be sure, the eternal return, or more exactly the willingness to endure it, is the conditio sine qua non for a truly natural morality." Strauss indicates to Lowith that ancient philosophy before the Stoics contemplated such questions, creating a natural standard upon which to judge actual practices, without feeling the necessity to act upon what they understood as naturally right; and it is this possibility which Lowith ignores when he criticizes the eternal return. "I think that you do not take seriously enough those intentions of Nietzsche which point beyond Nietzsche's teaching," summarizes Strauss. "For it is not sufficient simply to stop where Nietzsche is no longer right; rather one must ask whether or not Nietzsche himself became untrue to his intention to repeat antiquity, and did so as a result of his confinement within modern presuppositions or in polemics against these." This passage is of course fatal to Lampert's view because Lampert assumes Strauss finds Nietzsche to be right in all relevant respects other than the proper tactics for philosophy.

Strauss's published writings affirm the position found in the letters to Lowith. In *Natural Right and History* Strauss notes that the ancient philosophers explored the question of a natural morality,
but did not feel compelled to establish politically what they understood as natural right. First, the philosophers themselves were not that interested in the formation of values, preferring to remain in the higher realm of seeking to discover the truth. Second, political societies were necessarily vulgar: the public demanded a government by consent; and those who were wisest had to contend with competing visions of the good society. If the wise declared a right to rule, "what is more likely to happen is that an unwise man, appealing to the natural right of wisdom and catering to the lowest desires of the many, will persuade the multitude of his right: the prospects for tyranny are brighter than those for the rule of the wise," Finally, the contingencies created by force and accident, particularly contentious relations with other regimes, militated against a regime based on natural right. In short, nothing short of an accident could lead to the rule of those who are highest by nature.

Natural right would act as dynamite for civil society. In other words, the simply good, which is what is good by nature and which is radically different from the ancestral, must be transformed into the politically good, which is, as it were, the quotient of the simply good and the ancestral: the politically good is what 'removes a vast mass of evil without shocking a vast mass of prejudice.' It is in this necessity that the need for inexactness in political or moral matters is partly founded.51

As in his letter to Lowith, Strauss notes that the ancient philosopher sought to understand natural right, thus establishing a standard to evaluate the different hierarchy of ends that contributed to a political regime. But such a standard did not create a program for political practice or the legislation of values. "This standard is sufficient for passing judgement on the level of nobility of individuals and groups and of actions and institutions. But it is insufficient for guiding our actions."

In "Note on Nietzsche's Beyond Good and Evil" Strauss also discusses how Nietzsche's quest to revaluate morality in accordance with nature contributes to a contradictory stance toward nature
itself. Nietzsche's eternal return wills all that has happened in the past and future, allowing man to gain total autonomy and become the exclusive cause of himself, a necessary condition for the subjugation of non-sense and chance. Strauss reads Nietzsche as arguing that the creation of such an outlook stems from Nietzsche's belief that all moralities are man-made. Ironically, the very plasticity of morality requires Nietzsche to embrace nature as the only possible source of the creativity that remolds the plastic. In the last analysis, such a morality requires "not...reason but...nature:" something which is "deep down" in individuals and which culminates in the overman who shows his supremacy by the fact that he solves the most difficult, highest problem. "For Nietzsche," Strauss summarizes, "nature has become a problem and yet he cannot do without nature."

Probity and the Love of Truth

Because he pays no attention to how Strauss distinguishes the metaphysical views of Plato and Nietzsche, Lampert misrepresents Strauss's views concerning probity. Lampert makes a great deal of both Nietzsche's and Strauss's use of this term, which has to do with the willingness to accept the world and truth as it is. Lampert approves the virtue of probity-and of a Strauss who interprets Nietzsche as having this virtue-because probity refuses to allow us to turn our attention away from the affairs of this world. While analyzing both the Introduction to Philosophy and Law and the Preface to the Critique of Spinoza Lampert identifies Nietzsche as Strauss's "silent partner" in criticizing the Enlightenment on the basis of a "new bravery or probity and the intellectual conscience" (5, 93, 134-36). Lampert uses commitment to probity as the deciding factor in his own preference for Nietzsche over Strauss (172-73). But Lampert fails to appreciate or even acknowledge Strauss's critique of the dogmatism inhering in Nietzsche's probity.

Strauss is actually concerned that probity not replace the love of truth as the highest philosophical virtue and he finds contradictory features in Nietzsche's probity. On the one hand, Strauss appreciates Nietzsche's prizing of knowledge above all authority or tradition; Nietzsche's restless and severe approach to morality, religion,
and all truths, an orientation that is willing to face up to the possibility that the truth will be repulsive and deadly. Strauss evokes Nietzsche's well-known statement about the search for "truth" being the greatest test of one's "strength of spirit" when disagreeing with Lucretius's proposal to replace salutary myths among the public with philosophy. "One may therefore say that philosophy is productive of the deepest pain," Strauss noted. "Man has to choose between peace of mind deriving from a pleasing delusion and peace of mind deriving from the unpleasing truth." On the other hand, Strauss also views the "new probity" as the continuation of the movement started by Descartes to diminish the aims of reason, narrowing its foci to those areas which can withstand skeptical inquiry and establish absolute certainty.

Moreover, in contrast to Lampert's analysis, in both the Introduction to Philosophy and Law and the Preface to the Critique of Spinoza, Strauss finds Nietzsche betraying the virtue of intellectual honesty. Strauss recognizes that Nietzsche's probity contributes to his intransigent and thorough criticism of religious beliefs. But Strauss also insists that Nietzsche's probity has a dogmatic root. Lampert misses this assessment because he is in the thralls of the same dogma. This new dogma differs from that of the traditional believer who knows what God commands. The dogmatic skepticism of Nietzsche knows without a shadow of a doubt that we are unfettered by claims made upon us by the teachings of a revealed religious tradition. Yet, Strauss notes, such a faith cannot be proved either; it is based on the will and all beliefs are fatal to philosophy. The new probity defends its atheism by insisting that it will only accept knowledge that is based on certainty, an orientation which diminishes reason by denying the possibility of both transcendent truths and philosophy, while dogmatically insisting that its skeptical views are true. "The new probity is somewhat different from the old love of truth.... The impartiality that characterizes this probity is `the impartiality of not being partial to transcendent ideals,’” states Strauss. "If one makes atheism, which is admittedly not demonstrable, into a positive dogmatic premise, then the probity expressed by it is something very different from the love of truth." Indeed, such
probity may be called the characteristically modern form of dogmatism."

Strauss criticizes probity as the highest virtue in many places: when discussing Descartes's and Hobbes's lowered criterion for truth, the realistic interpretations of Machiavelli, Cohen's refusal to consider God as a source of morality, Kojève's preoccupation with solutions to problems, social science's limited focus, and the "final atheists" who, while admitting they are unable to provide an account of the whole, insist that God's existence is a human contrivance. Whereas Nietzsche often spoke of the intellectual conscience and intellectual honesty," Strauss emphasized the love of truth which aims at knowledge of the first principles and eternal features of the cosmos and grasps the problems inhering in attaining such knowledge. Of course, Nietzsche himself noted that the exaltation of honesty as the overriding philosophic virtue could lead to a failure to transcend the present. "Our honesty, we free spirits-let us see to it that it does not become our vanity, our finery and pomp, our limit, our stupidity.... Let us see that out of honesty we do not finally become saints and bores." Lampert, who tediously presents Nietzsche as a new prophet and trumpets his own philosophical piety, does not explore the meaning of this ironic and self-critical strand in Nietzsche's thinking. In short, he ignores Nietzsche's advice to the "philosopher and friends of knowledge" that "no philosopher so far has been proved right, and that there might be a more laudable truthfulness in every little question mark that you place after special words and favorite doctrines (and occasionally after yourselves) than in all the solemn gestures and trumps before accusers in law courts." Instead, Lampert's approach to Nietzsche's probity actualizes one of Nietzsche's greatest fears, "I want no believers," Nietzsche declares in Ecce Homo, "I think I am too malicious to believe in myself.... I have a terrible fear that I shall one day be pronounced holy."

Will to Power

Does Strauss subscribe to Nietzsche's doctrine of the will to power? Lampert, drawing on Strauss's discussion of the classical implica-
tions of the doctrine and the significant questions it poses for philosophy's attitude toward religion, assumes that the answer is "Yes." But to Strauss, Nietzsche's doctrine of will to power crystallizes the conflicting currents which he consistently finds in Nietzsche's thinking. One of those strains, Strauss insists, indicates the possibility of a return to an ancient approach to philosophy, an outlook which cannot preclude the possible existence of God.

Nietzsche's doctrine of will to power, according to Strauss, is a continuation of modern thought's emphasis on creativity and control, as well as the belief that meaning and order originates in "man, in man's creative acts, in his will to power." By abolishing an order external to the human will—a maneuver dictated by the need to release creative forces—Nietzsche is undercutting classical philosophy's claim to be the highest human activity. The philosophical quest, Strauss notes, presupposes the existence of exogenous, untreated truth; without it, the pursuit of knowledge seems irretrievably local, specific, and derivative, Nietzsche's dilemma, Strauss continues, is that while belief in absolute truth must be rejected as a barrier to value-formation in a value-less world, its absence is not without harmful consequences. One such problem would be of particular concern to Nietzsche: the status of his own theory of the will to power. For if there is no objective truth, the doctrine cannot be simply true, but would simply be an expression of Nietzsche's will to power. Nietzsche's solution, Strauss summarizes, is to suggest that the doctrine of the will to power is true in the sense that it is the self understanding of the will to power and the founding discovery of creativity. Strauss points out that Nietzsche's doctrine leaves open the possibility that the task of the philosopher is to discover pre-existent truths. "We state Nietzsche's suggestion following him in this manner: the philosopher tried to get hold of the 'text' as distinguished from 'interpretations'; they tried to 'discover' and not 'invent." To Strauss, Nietzsche is fighting to accommodate the competing currents: his doctrine both invents and discovers the truth. Nietzsche cannot get around the argument that some kind of end has been attained, and one finds Nietzsche both affirming and denying it as an objective truth. Strauss adds that, as Nietzsche
himself recognizes, the discovery of a truth higher than human artifice contributes to an understanding of reason that cannot preclude the possible existence of God.\textsuperscript{63}

Left, Right, and Nietzsche

Nietzsche's \textit{Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life} provides an opportunity to identify some of the most important approaches to Nietzsche's thinking in contemporary political thought. In this essay Nietzsche argues for a transformation of the values governing the study of history. Nietzsche charges that what is considered good scholarship—openness to the equal value of all past practices—actually reflects the weak modern intellectuals' inability to distinguish right and wrong. In turn, views of the past considered unscholarly, such as assertions of the superiority of some historical periods, really express a deeper, classical understanding that some forms of human existence are of a higher rank than others. Nietzsche predicts that without a change from the outlook that all concepts, types, and kinds are of the same worth, people will increasingly fall back on their own egos to determine right and wrong: "then let no one be surprised if that people perishes of pettiness and misery, of ossification and selfishness, that is, if to begin with it disintegrates and ceases to be a people, it may then perhaps be replaced by...fellowships intent on the rapacious exploitation of non-fellows and similar creations of utilitarian vulgarity."\textsuperscript{64} Nietzsche's view of history is animated by the contradictory claims that values are human constructs imposed on a senseless world and that these moralities can be evaluated as better or worse in relation to their understanding of nature and human excellence. The genuine historian, according to Nietzsche, provides studies that address different types of human needs. "Monumental history" serves life by recognizing the role of individuals in rising above prevailing contexts while performing great deeds. "Antiquarian history" serves life by venerating prevailing practices as historically grounded wisdom. "Critical history" serves life by condemning and uprooting the anterior foundations of certain practices.

Postmodern theorists of the Left, such as Michel Foucault, find
Nietzsche's teaching that history is a human construct on a senseless world a spur to the individual who seeks to utilize his will to overcome the past completely. Eschewing Nietzsche's understanding that creativity must be informed by a rank order of ideas and forms of life, Foucault identifies Nietzsche as the founder of the idea that individual autonomy is attained through the ceaseless making of oneself into different types and kinds. "History becomes effective," Foucault states while discussing Nietzsche, "to the degree that it introduces discontinuity into our very being-as it divides our emotions, dramatizes our instincts, multiplies our body and sets it against itself." Foucault's goal is the "sell" that isn't given, but sought after, constructed, authored, fabricated, and formed by various contingent, revisable and malleable practices of self-creation. The self becomes a blank slate upon which we experiment and recreate ourselves again and again through various "styles of existence."

Foucault's historical studies encourage people to invent new forms of self-relationship by explaining that there are no intrinsic constraints on the possibilities of self-invention. Foucault intends his History of Sexuality, for example, "to be an ethics, or at least to show what could be an ethics of sexual behavior." Foucault's normative concern is "one which would not be dominated by the problem of the deep truth of the reality of our sex life. The relationship that I think we need to have with ourselves when we have sex is an ethics of pleasure, of intensification of pleasure." This pleasure will be attained, Foucault insists, by the pursuit of endless sexual variation in our sexual practices, enabling us to experience the superficiality of any single approach.

Lampert, who also presents the postmodern understanding that all truths are constructed and legislated (save the truth that there is no "truth"), draws a different lesson from Nietzsche. Lampert purports to learn from Nietzsche that there are better and worse forms of history, that ascribing equality to all practices of the past is self-destructive, and that the study of the past must be transformed. While Foucault draws from Nietzsche lessons as to how the individual can engage in total self-making or self-creating, Lampert
learns from Nietzsche revaluation, the philosopher's ability to legislate the values which totally define a new age. "What was Nietzsche's intent? To rule the world. Nietzsche had the same intent as Plato" (128).

Despite the differences exemplified by Foucault and Lampert, a unifying theme of the postmodernist thinkers of the Left and the Right is the view that as all principles of morality, as well as reason itself, are socially constructed and that the will is capable of raising itself above all limitations to remake completely either the individual or the fundamental assumptions of an era. Unlike a healthy skepticism—most notably expressed by Plato—which promotes modesty through its recognition of the limits of our knowledge on the most important questions, postmodernism is certain it understands the most important things. The only questions that remain to be realized are either the proper styles of existence for attaining complete autonomy or the proper strategy for the philosophers' legislation of values. In fact, postmodernism is simply the latest (albeit more ignoble) expression of modern philosophy's long standing quest to replace God and attain mastery over nature, the past, and the future.

It is unlikely that Leo Strauss would have denied that either Foucault's or Lampert's celebration of Nietzsche as the philosopher of creativity and the will has certain support in aspects of Nietzsche's thinking. But it is also likely that Strauss would have judged that both postmodern theorists developed narrow and restricted views of Nietzsche, vulgar interpretations that disfigure the beauty of Nietzsche's philosophical explorations. Indeed, Lampert—no less than Foucault—obscures the Nietzsche that Strauss sought to bring to light. Both cover up the Nietzsche who sought to discover the human drives underlying different forms, of history and other valuations—the Nietzsche who deserves our gratitude. Strauss appreciated Nietzsche not because of the creation of specific beliefs or the promotion of styles of existence, but because of his successful answering of the question he himself poses in The Gay Science. There he asks, who is most influential? And he responds with the reflection: "When a human being resists his whole age and stops it at the gate to demand an accounting, this must have influence.
Whether this is what he desires is immaterial; that he can do it is what matters." This is the Nietzsche who battled to determine whether the cosmos had an intelligible character, struggled to find if there was a suprahistorical ethical order, and most important, like Plato, understood that the quest to discover the answer to these questions was a noble calling.

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Notes


5. A unifying theme between Lampert, a postmodernist of the Right, and Foucault, a postmodernist of the Left, will be discussed at the end of this essay.


7. Lampert is well aware that Nietzsche is studied quite closely, and in some instances followed, by many who claim to being Straussian. Lampert's main study of Nietzsche, *Nietzsche's Teachings: An Interpretation of Zarathustra* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), repeatedly refers to the analyses of Nietzsche by Thomas Pangle and Werner Dannhauser.


9. Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1953), 32; *On Tyranny* (New York: The Free Press, 1991), 196. As will be discussed below, Lampert's view that revaluation is the most important feature of Nietzsche's thinking is a narrow or restricted approach to Nietzsche as well. For a reading of Nietzsche that places the quest to understand the highest life at the forefront of Nietzsche's thought see Berkowitz, *Nietzsche: The Ethics of an Immoralist*.


12. Lampert maintains that "Farabi's Plato" is Strauss's most candid statement about Farabi. This is why, Lampert conjectures,
Strauss never reprinted this essay in later books of essays that were assembled. "Farabi's Plato" also provides the basis to Strauss's other essays on Farabi (137).


14. Ibid., 392-93. Lampert emphasizes the skepticism of Farabi, but not Farabi's Plato. The former's skepticism is stressed to raise doubt as to whether Farabi really believed in revelation and God (compare 16-20, 138-42).

15. Ibid., 393

16. Ibid., 381.

17. For excellent discussions on similarities and differences in Farabi's and Strauss's readings of Plato see Christopher Colmo, "Theory and Practice: Alfarabi's Plato Revisited,"American Political Science Review 86, no. 4 (December 1992), 966-76; Catherine Zuckert, Postmodern Platos, 116-18, 156-64.


19. Ibid., 382.


21. Leo Strauss, What is Political Philosophy? (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959), 153. Farabi's distinction between Socrates and Plato exists at different levels: a.) Plato as a more tactical Socrates, one who utilizes moderate tactics to attain radical goals; b.) Plato, unlike Socrates, is moderate in speech, but his writings slowly replace opinion with knowledge. Lampert primarily identifies Farabi's distinction between Plato and Socrates at the former level.


24. Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, 139-43:


27. Lampert also ascribes this position to Bacon, Descartes, and Montaigne. In short, Lampert identifies a medieval muslim philosopher, the founders of the Enlightenment, a skeptical essayist who was influenced by the ancients, the Enlightenment's greatest critic and an avowed atheist, and a philosopher who studied Platonic dialogues and the claims put forward by both medieval and modern authors on behalf of revealed religion, as all having the same position on Socrates's and Plato's views on the proper relation between philosophy and art and the philosopher and the city. While Lampert presents himself as a pious student of all of these thinkers, it appears that he cannot resist associating each of them with his own views on Socrates and Plato. See Laurence Lampert, *Nietzsche and Modern Times: A Study of Bacon, Descartes, and Nietzsche* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 46, 181-83, 203-206, 211, 409-410.


35. The most notable contemporary expression of this view is presented by Karl Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, vol 1, *The Spell of Plato* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962). Among major Western thinkers, the liberal John Stuart Mill comes closest to Strauss's position in finding a philosophical skepticism,

36. Strauss, Natural Right and History, 32, 124; On a New Interpretation of Plato's Political Philosophy, "Social Research 13, no. 3 (September, 1946), 351.


39. Strauss, "Three Waves of Modernity," 98. Recognizing the difference that also exists between Plato's and Nietzsche's metaphysics, Strauss follows this assessment with the following thought. "Nevertheless, what [Nietzsche] said was read by political men and inspired them. He is as little responsible for fascism as Rousseau is responsible for Jacobinism. This means, however, that he is as much responsible for fascism as Rousseau was for Jacobinism."


43. See Zuckert, Postmodern Platos, 4-5,30-32, 164-68.


45: Strauss, "Preface, 30-31; Natural Right and History, 26; "Note," 176-77.

46. Lampert’s distinguishing of Strauss from Nietzsche on the
basis that the former teaches a skeptical, not legislative, Plato compromises Lampert's central thesis. But this is the only moment where Lampert approaches an accurate assessment of Strauss's view of Plato.

47. Lampert says that Strauss could not have ascribed a modern current to Nietzsche's thinking as Strauss associated modernity with two key beliefs: the conquest of nature based on modern science; the diffusion of wisdom or scientific knowledge; and one never finds Strauss associating either of these goals with Nietzsche's thinking (117-18). But this view overlooks that Strauss's critique centers on Nietzsche's tendency to take a modern approach to ancient thinking. Such an outlook would not lead to the advocacy of the diffusion of knowledge nor the conquering of nature through science. It could lead to the advocacy of a revaluated natural morality.


49. "Correspondence," 182-83; SPPP, 140-41.

50. Strauss, Natural Right and History, 141.

51. Ibid., 153.

52. Ibid., 163.


54. Leo Strauss, Liberalism Ancient and Modern, 85. Also see Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, sc. 39, 49.


56. Strauss, Spinoza's Critique of Religion, 29-31, 181-82; Natural Right and History, 171-74; Thoughts On Machiavelli, 11-14 SPPP, 246; On Tyranny, 209-210; Liberalism Ancient and
Plato, Nietzsche, & Strauss

Modern, 218-19; Philosophy and Law, 34-39.


60. Ibid., set. 25, 37.


62. Lampert observes that Strauss includes a commentary in this section of "Note." He concludes that this digression is Strauss's signal to his supporters that he believes that the doctrine of will to power is true (43). He neglects to note that Strauss's commentary argues that Nietzsche's doctrine leads one to see that the task of the philosopher is to discover and find, not create or legislate, the truth.


